

Jewel of Sox's farm system, Bogaerts shining

After delivering in postseason, rookie has chance to be 2014 Opening Day starter

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BOSTON -- The uncanny poise and the steady demeanor are seemingly inherent for prospect-turned-fixture [Xander Bogaerts](#), the 21-year-old infielder who has approached the grandest of stages with the greatest of ease.

So is the necessary ability to say "no."



- [Gm 1: BOS 8, STL 1](#)
- [Gm 2: STL 4, BOS 2](#)
- [Gm 3: STL 5, BOS 4](#)
- [Gm 4: BOS 4, STL 2](#)
- [Gm 5: BOS 3, STL 1](#)

- Gm 6: Wed., 7:30 p.m. ET

- Gm 7*: Thu., 7:30 p.m. ET

*- *If necessary*

"I've never had a problem with that," Bogaerts said after Tuesday afternoon's workout at Fenway Park. "I tell you the reason, and that's it. And you just have to understand."

Bogaerts was talking about ticket requests. He's been overwhelmed by them. They keep pouring in, more and more, as his improbable ride gains steam and Boston's title pursuit draws closer.

When you hail from Aruba, a tiny island in the Caribbean, as one of five Major Leaguers to come out of there, and are doing the kinds of things Bogaerts has done for a team that's one win away from a World Series championship, you're bound to hear from the distant cousins and the elementary school friends who want to experience it all, too.

"And I get that a *lot*," Bogaerts said. "But that's it. I can't anymore. I have my family here, [they get] here tomorrow, and I have to worry about what I'm doing."

Bogaerts -- perhaps the best Red Sox prospect since Nomar Garciaparra -- is basically doing the unthinkable, despite playing in Double-A as recently as June 12, coming off the bench in Game 5 of the American League Championship Series and, quite fittingly, not being of legal drinking age until the calendar flipped to October.

Since then he's posted a .348/.467/.565 slash line while walking six times and scoring nine runs -- and he's had his fingerprints all over these playoffs.

"I never imagined it would be like this," he said, "but here we are."

Entering the AL Division Series clincher (Game 4) as a pinch-hitter in the seventh inning, Bogaerts went on to draw two walks and score two runs in Boston's 3-1 win. In the ALCS clincher (Game 6), he reached base safely in three plate appearances and scored two of Boston's five runs.

He then struggled against the Cardinals in the first few World Series games, going 0-for-6 with four strikeouts, and everyone back home started freaking out.

"Everyone was like, 'Bogaerts, what's going on?'" he said. "I was like, 'Don't panic. Relax. It's baseball. You have ups and downs.'"

Then Bogaerts temporarily tied Game 3 against lights-out closer [Trevor Rosenthal](#) in the eighth, reached base twice in Game 4 and went 2-for-4 in Game 5, a big reason the Red Sox are leading the Series, 3-2, with back-to-back games at Fenway looming.

"He's not a typical 21-year-old," manager John Farrell said. "We've talked a lot about the poise, the presence, the composure in which he plays. Even in the tightest moments, the smile never seems to leave his face. He might be flying on the inside, but externally, there's no outward anxious moments."

In 2009 the Red Sox signed a 16-year-old shortstop-playing Bogaerts -- along with his twin brother, Jair, who no longer plays -- for \$410,000 and ever since then he's exceeded expectations at every level.

Bogaerts entered 2013 as the 20th-best prospect in baseball as [ranked by MLB.com](#), and he was able to draw from the experience of suiting up for the Netherlands in the World Baseball Classic and taking part in Major League Spring Training.

He batted .311/.407/.502 in Double-A, then .284/.369/.453 in Triple-A, and promptly became the first Red Sox player since [Jeff Suppan](#) in 1995 to debut in the Majors at 20 years old.

He's the third-youngest player in baseball, behind only [Jurickson Profar](#) of the Rangers and [Bryce Harper](#) of the Nationals, has the third-most playoff walks for a player 21 or younger -- trailing [Edgar Renteria](#) and [Andrew Jones](#) -- and recently became the youngest player in Red Sox history to start a World Series game.

You might have heard of the second-place guy: Babe Ruth.

"I mean, sometimes I can't even believe I'm here," Bogaerts said -- but he'll get used to it soon enough.

Bogaerts has been the jewel of the Red Sox farm system for quite a while, a big reason they were willing to part ways with [Jose Iglesias](#) before the non-waiver Trade Deadline, and with [Stephen Drew](#) eligible for free agency this offseason, there's a good chance Bogaerts will be the Opening Day shortstop as early as 2014.

"The sky is the limit for him," second baseman [Dustin Pedroia](#) said. "And him getting this experience and playing on this stage, it's only going to help him down the road. He's going to take over a leadership role, too, soon."

Bogaerts' ears perked up when he heard that last part.

"It's probably a dream come true if that happens," he said of one day being a leader. "I've just got to keep working hard and make it happen."

When this season ends, though -- either Wednesday or Thursday -- Bogaerts is going to lie low for a while. He'll fly back to Aruba and find a beach, which shouldn't be all that difficult, and finally get a chance to soak it all in.

But going home, he admits, will never be the same.

"It's hectic down there now," he said. "It's probably going to be crazy when I go back, but I'm not really sure what to expect. I'm just enjoying this."

***Alden Gonzalez** is a reporter for MLB.com. Read his [columns](#) and his blog, [Gonzo and "The Show"](#), and follow him on Twitter [@Alden_Gonzalez](#). This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.*

Bron : http://boston.redsox.mlb.com/news/article/bos/jewel-of-red-soxs-farm-system-xander-bogaerts-shining?ymd=20131029&content_id=63479800&vkey=news_bos